



The President's Daily Brief

6 May 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

EUROPE

Confidential polls taken late last week show Pompidou with a wide popular lead over any single opposition candidate for the presidency. In the first testing of French public opinion since the Gaullists closed ranks behind the former premier, 44 percent said that they would vote for him. The combined opposition to Pompidou also received a total of 44 percent, but it was divided among four different political leaders. Twelve percent were undecided.

While the position of moderate leftist Gaston Defferre has recently improved with Socialist Party endorsement and the withdrawal of two rivals, his most pressing problem is his relationship with the Communist Party. He cannot hope to win without Communist support on the second ballot, but he is reluctant to court the Communists because of conviction--he has a consistent anti-Communist record--and because any such action would inevitably alienate the centrists.

The Communist Party itself, which found none of the democratic left candidates acceptable, has decided to put forward its own man--old-line Stalinist Jacques Duclos. In parliamentary elections, the Communists usually capture about 20 percent of the vote, but the appeal of a Party candidate for President has never been tested in a popular election.

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VIETNAM

The treatment accorded Le Duc Tho in Peking and Moscow on his way back to Paris provides a good indicator that there has been no basic change in Hanoi's policy of seeking a negotiated settlement of the war. Peking's usual reception of him--without a word of publicity--suggested continued Chinese disapproval of Hanoi's policy. [redacted] in Peking [redacted] Tho was seen off at the airport by Deputy Foreign Minister Han Nien-lung, a very low-level official for a man of Tho's rank.

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In contrast to the cold shoulder Tho got in China, the Soviets rolled out their customary red carpet for him. Kosygin received him and hosted a dinner in his honor. The communiqué issued at the conclusion of their meetings reflected the continued closeness of Hanoi and Moscow. Tho dropped a hint on his return to Paris that relations with Moscow might even be improving. In response to a question about Hanoi's possible attendance at the upcoming Moscow-sponsored conference of Communist parties, Tho said that Hanoi had not yet taken a position. From Moscow's point of view, this equivocation is an advance over Hanoi's former refusal to attend any of the preparatory meetings for this conference.

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Husayn is now making a protocol visit to Saudi Arabia and will return home on Wednesday.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

INDIA

Within the next six months, India must choose a new president to succeed the late Zakir Husain, and we anticipate that the selection process will be difficult and acrimonious. The presidency, like the British Monarchy for which it originally was a surrogate, traditionally plays a largely ceremonial role, but the constitution gives the president considerable latent power. Among other things, he can dissolve parliament and suspend state governments, and he also serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. So far, he has acted only on the advice of the cabinet, but this is a convention inherited from the British rather than a formal requirement. If the Congress Party's hold on the country continues to slip--and especially if the party loses its majority in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 1972--the presidency is certain to take on much more importance.

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With these thoughts in mind, Indian politicians of all stripes have begun looking around for candidates favorable to their interests. The most serious effects of this search probably will be felt by the Congress Party itself, since the bitterness engendered in the process will give the party one more nudge downhill.

PERU

The Velasco government has recently renewed its "moralization" campaign, the goal of which seems to be the complete discrediting of normal political processes. This drift toward authoritarianism will be limited to some extent by the government's desire to maintain hemispheric support for Peru in its dispute with the US. Nevertheless, the campaign is being pressed with considerable vigor. The current emphasis is on alleged corruption among officials of the previous administration and even among dissident members of the current government. Interior Minister Artola, who seems to be the campaign's leader, has also denounced local governments for incompetence and has postponed municipal elections which were scheduled for later this year. [REDACTED]

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